

LISTING OF THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Claims 1-21 Cancelled

22. (Currently amended) A ceramic filter element comprising:

a main part; ~~and~~

at least one terminal region; and

a plurality of flow channels passing unrestricted through said main part and said at least one terminal region, wherein said at least one terminal region has a smaller diameter than said main part.

23. (Currently amended) The ceramic filter element of claim 22, further comprising a ~~collar~~ sealing ring.

24. (Currently amended) The ceramic filter element of claim 23, wherein said ~~collar~~ sealing ring surrounds the ceramic filter element at said at least one terminal region.

25. (Currently amended) The ceramic filter element of claim 23, wherein said ~~collar~~ sealing ring abuts a shoulder defined by said main part and said at least one terminal region, said shoulder having the ability to take up an axial thrust force that acts upon the ceramic filter element.

26. (Previously presented) The ceramic filter element of claim 22, wherein said main part and said at least one terminal region each have a cross-sectional shape selected from the group consisting of circular, oval, hexagonal, and polygonal.

27. (Previously presented) The ceramic filter element of claim 22, wherein said main part and said at least one terminal region are rod-shaped.

28. (Previously presented) The ceramic filter element of claim 22, wherein said at least one terminal region is a rod end.

29. (Currently amended) A membrane module for filtering a medium to at least yield a permeate, comprising:

a plurality of ceramic filter elements being arranged parallel to one another, at least one of said plurality of ceramic filter elements having a main part and at least one terminal region, said at least one terminal region having a smaller diameter than said main part, said smaller diameter being defined without restricting flow of the medium through said terminal region.

30. (Previously presented) The membrane module of claim 29, wherein said at least one of said plurality of ceramic filter elements has a cross-sectional shape selected from the group consisting of circular, oval, hexagonal, and polygonal.

31. (Currently amended) The membrane module of claim 29, further comprising:

a housing for enclosing said plurality of ceramic filter elements;

~~a collar for surrounding said at least one of said plurality of ceramic filter elements at said at least one terminal region;~~

a cover being clamped to said at least one terminal region, said cover having a plurality of openings, said cover being perpendicular to said plurality of ceramic filter elements; and

a finished seal being between said at least one terminal region and each of said plurality of openings in said cover.

32. (Previously presented) The membrane module of claim 31, wherein said at least one terminal region is reinforced at least on a peripheral edge of said at least one terminal region so that the medium cannot come into contact with said finished seal.

33. (Previously presented) The membrane module of claim 31, further comprising a permeate outlet connection arranged on said housing such that an inside space of said housing is completely emptied of the permeate when the membrane module is not in operation.

34. (Previously presented) The membrane module of claim 31, wherein said cover has an inner plate and an outer plate, said finished seal being enclosed between said inner plate and said outer plate, a free space being provided radially outside a periphery of said finished seal between said inner plate and said outer plate, said finished seal being reinforced on said periphery such that extension of said finished seal into said free space when said inner plate and said outer plate are clamped together is hindered.

35. (Currently amended) The membrane module of claim ~~30~~ 31, wherein said ~~collar~~ finished seal abuts a shoulder defined by said main part and said at least one terminal region, said shoulder having the ability to take up an axial thrust force that acts upon said plurality of ceramic filter elements.

36. (New) A ceramic filter element comprising:

a first terminal region having a first outer dimension;

a main part having a second outer dimension, said second outer dimension being larger than said first outer dimension;
and

a plurality of flow channels passing through said main part and said first terminal region, each of said plurality of flow channels having a constant inner dimension.

37. (New) The ceramic filter element of claim 36, further comprising a second terminal region having said first outer dimension.

38. (New) The ceramic filter element of claim 36, further comprising a shoulder defined by said main part and said first terminal region, said shoulder having the ability to take up an axial thrust force that acts upon the ceramic filter element.

39. (New) The ceramic filter element of claim 36, wherein said main part and said first terminal region each have a cross-sectional shape selected from the group consisting of circular, oval, hexagonal, polygonal, and any combinations thereof.